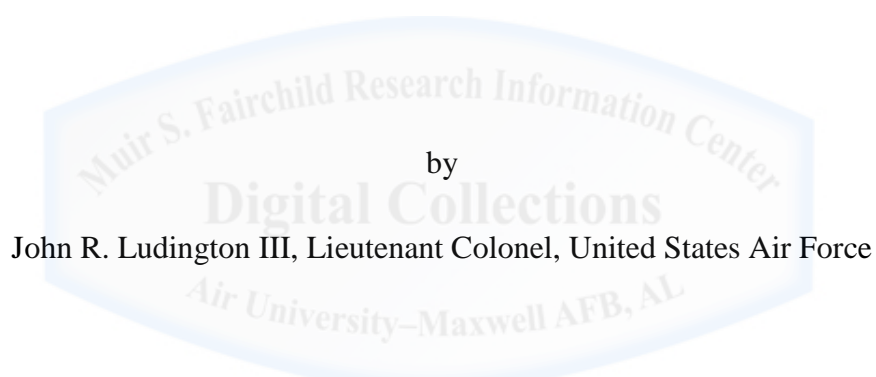


AIR WAR COLLEGE

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COVERING THE SEAMS IN U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY
BY APPLYING NETWORK AND TEAM ATTRIBUTES



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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel John R. Ludington III assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He is a Command Pilot in the U.S. Air Force with experience in airlift, tanker, and trainer aircraft. He has held a variety of positions at the squadron, group, and wing level, including commanding a flying training squadron. Earlier in his career, Lieutenant Colonel Ludington completed the Air Force Intern Program with rotations at the Joint Staff Directorate for Logistics and the Air Force Office of Legislative Liaison. Later, he was assigned as a Military Advisor at the U.S. Department of State. Prior to his studies at the Air War College, Lieutenant Colonel Ludington was a Division Chief in the Strategy and Concepts Directorate at the LeMay Center for Doctrine Development and Education. Lieutenant Colonel Ludington was commissioned from the U.S. Air Force Academy and holds a Master of Arts degree from The George Washington University.

Abstract

Since its establishment by the National Security Act of 1947, the modern U.S. national security system has evolved as a result of legislation, presidential preference, and because of changes in the U.S. and international security environments. With each evolution, the system has found ways to function in dealing with a wide range of threats facing the country. At the same time, each evolution has created unintended consequences and even some weaknesses. Today, one such weakness is the seams that exist in the system. Organizational criteria like geography, functions, and responsibilities often create these seams. These seams are exactly the kinds of weaknesses that are exploited by modern transnational and transregional threats, such as terrorists, criminals, and peer military competitors. Even, non-traditional threats like pandemics and environmental challenges are often made worse because of seams in the U.S. national security system. Simple reorganization or restructuring of the system is unlikely to achieve a more optimum outcome, and would likely just create different seams. However, considering that the U.S. national security system is itself a network, focusing on improving on attributes advantageous to networks and teams has the potential to reduce the seams, enable the U.S. to seize and retain initiative, and make the U.S. system--the U.S. network--stronger, more responsive, and more adaptable as the security challenges of the modern environment continue to evolve and adapt.

Introduction

The U.S. ratified the National Security Act of 1947 establishing much of the U.S. government's modern national security apparatus. In part, this legislation "reorganize[d] the conduct of national security affairs for the U.S. government to ensure that a surprise attack upon the United States, such as that inflicted at Pearl Harbor, would never again occur."¹ It dramatically reorganized "The National Military Establishment" and formally established the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Council (NSC).² Specifically, the law stated that the purpose of the NSC "shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving national security."³ Similarly, each department and agency that contributes to U.S. national security is organized to enable their own mission execution, while at the same time interacting within the larger national security system. These individual systems take on their own characteristics, organization, and structures which, when aggregated back together, make for an increasingly complicated and complex U.S. national security system. The cooperation and interaction that was built into the national security system from the outset created a network architecture.

At the same time, the U.S. and its national security apparatus exist in an increasingly dynamic international environment. This international environment is populated by traditional actors such as nation states and international organizations and an increasing number of non-traditional actors, ranging from multinational corporations and other non-governmental organizations to transnational and transregional criminal and terrorist organizations. Further complicating matters, modern information and transportation technologies have increasingly

connected larger parts of the world, all captured within “globalization.” While globalization has created opportunities, it has also created significant challenges for the U.S. national security system. Modern national security threats are less likely to be simply isolated and directly confronted. Illicit transnational networks display a “resourcefulness, adaptability, innovativeness, and ability...to circumvent countermeasures and make them formidable foes for national governments and international organizations alike.”⁴ These advantages help provide networks initiative, particularly when they are able to exploit seams in security systems.

One commonality with these global threats, whether transnational networked organizations, pandemics, or environmental challenges, is that they all effectively exploit seams in the U.S. national security system. These seams are a natural result of organization and structure, often exacerbated by classic bureaucratic, hierarchical systems designed to bundle activities into neat portfolios. Global threats to U.S. national security that span borders, boundaries, and other predefined areas of responsibility are often able to capitalize on weaknesses in the U.S. national security system. As a result, the current U.S. national security system has challenges addressing transnational and transregional threats. Some have suggested that the U.S. should create a network to fight these kinds of threats. However, the U.S. national security system is already a network. That said, it is one that needs to reinvigorate network and team attributes to increase capability to cover seams. Building trust, focusing on mission and purpose, sharing information, and decentralizing and empowering execution generate advantages like speed, agility, resilience, and surprise for networks and teams, ultimately generating the strategic initiative for U.S. national security. Fostering this network and encouraging it to act more like a team offers the chance to cover any existing seams and maintain strategic initiative for generations into the future.

The U.S. National Security System

While the National Security Act of 1947 is the progenitor of today's modern national security system, its initial purposes set in motion a system that has evolved over time, with successive presidential administrations and security contexts informing and adjusting organization, structure, and processes.⁵ Since 1947, Congress has legislated changes to the original act, such as designating the Secretary of Energy as a formal member of the NSC, and designating the Director of National Intelligence and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as statutory advisors.⁶ Richard Best describes the NSC as having a "malleable organization, to use as each President saw fit."⁷ At the beginning of his administration, President Obama specified additional members of his NSC, including the Secretary of Treasury, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the U.S. Representative to the United Nations, the Chief of Staff, and the National Security Advisor, and further specified additional participants in the national security process depending on the subject matter being addressed.⁸ Similarly, President Obama worked to "end the artificial divide between White House staff who have been dealing with national security and homeland security issues."⁹

Beyond the NSC and the national security staff, the Department of Defense (DoD) has a major role in the U.S. national security system, with its own mission and organization. According to its website, "the mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country."¹⁰ For the DoD, the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 is, according to the department's Historical Office, the "most important legislation affecting the Department of Defense between 1978 and 2003."¹¹ Of the many changes resulting from that legislation was

ensuring combatant commands had the necessary and appropriate authority for assigned missions, including development of strategy and contingency planning.¹² The Department of Defense, through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defines areas of geographic and functional responsibility for the combatant commands via the Unified Command Plan (UCP). By its existence, the UCP creates mission and geographic boundaries--seams--that partition the entire world for military purposes.

Another key component of the U.S. national security system is the U.S. Department of State (DoS). DoS describes its mission to “shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere.”¹³ Similar to the NSC and the DoD, DoS is organized both functionally and regionally, but with the power centered within the department’s political affairs and regional bureaus. The Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs is “the Department’s fourth-ranking official,” responsible for “regional and bilateral policy issues” and overseeing department’s regional bureaus.¹⁴ The DoS bureaus provide support to the department’s overseas diplomatic missions, but also maintain responsibility for U.S. foreign policy development and implementation. Because of this internal arrangement, DoS also partitions the world, creating seams, to accomplish its mission. The realization and challenge of geographic boundaries is most apparent in the DoS at the individual country level, where diplomatic posts exist to maintain diplomatic relations with another specific state.¹⁵

Like the NSC, DoD, and DoS, other components of the national security system have their own organizations that come along with similar concerns for boundaries, borders and delineated areas of responsibility. Day-to-day work and mission execution requires some kind of organizational structure so that it can actually be productively accomplished. It is important to

note that each component of the national security system is responsible for its own structure and organization and the resulting partitioning. Equally important, the partitioning is not the same across departments and agencies. For example, the DoD's geographic combatant command areas of responsibility do not match the DoS regional bureaus.

The structure of the system and the structures within the system's components provides a starting place to identify seams that transnational threats are able to exploit. The assumed dichotomy between domestic and foreign-focused government departments and agencies is one seam. This separation between inward and outward facing components of the system was built on certain assumptions that have more recently been recognized as a potential vulnerability. The Bush Administration attempted to cover this inward-outward seam by establishing the Homeland Security Council and the Office of Homeland Security.¹⁶ However, James Steinberg described this system as "bifurcated," writing that "Protecting the homeland requires a seamless connection of efforts abroad, across U.S. borders, and in the United States itself."¹⁷ Steinberg also levels criticism towards the U.S. intelligence community and the DoD for not doing enough to seamlessly integrate contributions to national security.¹⁸ Further, he points to foreign-domestic information "disconnects" between CIA, FBI, and U.S. border agencies prior to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and suggests that better coordination could have prevented the attack.¹⁹ Steinberg suggests this bifurcation exists for at least two reasons. First is a concern about capacity, and specifically "the risk of overload on the national security advisor."²⁰ Second is a concern about including non-traditional participants in the U.S. national security system.²¹ Any focus on single individuals within any large organizational system will likely lead to concerns about individual capacity and capability. And, limiting a definition of national security by more narrowly including participants in the process will only expose additional seams, if not

allowing for glaring blind spots. Steinberg captures the simple importance of covering the foreign-domestic U.S. national security seam writing “The activities of domestic agencies not only directly affect the fight against terrorism abroad, but can also have an impact on other important U.S. foreign policy priorities....”²² This logic parallels President Obama’s decision early in his administration to merge the Homeland Security Council and National Security Council staffs to “support all White House policymaking activities related to international, transnational, and homeland security matters.”²³ According to the President’s statement, “these decisions reflect the fundamental truth that the challenges of the 21st Century are increasingly unconventional and transnational....”²⁴

As another example of seams in the system, consider the ongoing conflict in Syria and Northern Iraq. Because of its functional and geographical complexity, this national security challenge involves multiple U.S. combatant commands, multiple DoS bureaus, and many other parts of the U.S. government.²⁵ Leaders within the U.S. national security system will implicitly acknowledge these kinds of challenges. In her confirmation testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee last year, General Lori Robinson stated,

“The Commander of U.S. Northern Command maintains close relationships with all the combatant commanders and especially the Commander of U.S. Southern Command in continuing efforts to close seams on the southern border of U.S. Northern Command's area of responsibility. Regular dialogue about transregional threats and multi-domain challenges to close gaps and seams are essential for defense of the homeland. If confirmed, I intend to further strengthen U.S. Northern Command's established, vital relationships with the other combatant commanders.”²⁶

Similar statements about combatant command boundaries appear in other recent confirmation testimony.²⁷ In each example, senior U.S. military commanders acknowledge the challenges of defined areas of responsibility in addressing challenges to national security.

Exploiting Seams

The 9/11 Commission Report criticizes the Clinton administration for its poor understanding of al Qaeda and the networked threat it had become in the late 1990s. The report states, “Despite the availability of information that al Qaeda was a global network, in 1998 policymakers knew little about the organization.”²⁸ Further, “documents at the time referred to Bin Ladin ‘and his associates’ or Bin Ladin and his ‘network.’ They did not emphasize the existence of a structured worldwide organization gearing up to train thousands of potential terrorists.”²⁹ The 1998 bombing attacks on separate U.S. embassies in Africa highlighted one of the ways that al Qaeda took advantage of borders, something the 9/11 Commission Report described as an “ominous...demonstration of an operational capability to coordinate two nearly simultaneous attacks...in different locations.”³⁰ Following these attacks, senior Clinton administration officials started to ask questions about the possibility of a “radically new” danger posed by Bin Ladin and al Qaeda only to be consumed with ongoing challenges in the Balkans and with Saddam Hussein in Iraq.³¹ However, much of the national security system focus remained specifically on Bin Ladin.

The 9/11 plot happened in a way that specifically exploited the foreign-domestic seam in the U.S. national security system. Ultimately, the 9/11 Commission Report states,

The September 11 attacks fell into a void between the foreign and domestic threats. The foreign intelligence agencies were watching overseas, alert to foreign threats to U.S. interests there. The domestic agencies were waiting for evidence of a domestic threat from sleeper cells within the United States. No one was looking for a foreign threat to domestic targets. The threat that was coming was not from sleeper cells. It was foreign--but from foreigners who had infiltrated into the United States.³²

At the same time, the collection of al Qaeda hijackers organized themselves in a way to avoid significant suspicion, what many now describe as a network. Describing a bottom-up approach,

Beech writes, "The 9/11 terrorist cell was not created or directed by a central node or hierarchical apparatus. Instead, the entities within the network were coupled together by loose informal associations forming mutually dependant (sic) interrelationships with an ever widening group of like-minded Muslims."³³ Beech further describes al Qaeda as "intentionally decentralized with recursive operational and financial interrelationships dispersed geographically across numerous associated terrorist organizations that adapt, couple and aggregate in pursuit of common interests."³⁴ Because of its decentralized organization, al Qaeda achieved an advantage against the less agile U.S. national security system. Even a former U.S. Central Command planning officer was quick to describe al Qaeda as a network with logistics happening in at least one region and country, finance in other regions and countries, training in yet other regions and countries. From his, and CENTCOM's perspective, each region and each country had different levels of will and levels of ability and capability to confront the al Qaeda network in their own jurisdiction.³⁵

Shortly after 9/11, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt published an afterward to *Networks and Netwars* specifically about the recent attacks on the U.S, and the disruptive impact al Qaeda had made on the U.S. national security system. They described al Qaeda as an "information-age terrorist organization" with "capabilities to strike multiple targets from multiple directions, in swarming campaigns that extend beyond an incident or two."³⁶ From the very outset of U.S. operations against Bin Laden and al Qaeda, there was a recognition that this adversary was different. Arquilla and Ronfeldt summarized al Qaeda as having "a grasp of the nonlinear nature of the battlespace, and of the value of attack from multiple directions by dispersed units" and employing "a swarm-like doctrine that features a campaign of episodic, pulsing attacks by various nodes of his network--at locations sprawled across global time and space where he has

advantages for seizing the initiative, stealthily.”³⁷ Even as early as late 2001 it was obvious that the challenges al Qaeda presented to the U.S. national security system would be difficult to overcome. Analogizing al Qaeda to the online music-sharing service Napster and powerful drug cartels from the 1990s, Arquilla and Ronfeldt wrote in the fall of 2001, “the risk is that small, more nimble networks may spring up as successors to a defeated large network.”³⁸ Each of these organizations was blind to traditional borders, boundaries, organization, and structure and was adept at circumventing defenses, permeating security systems, and exploiting seams.

A current example of the challenges created by seams is the conflict in Syria and Northern Iraq and the associated international and interregional refugee flow. While much of the conflict is within CENTCOM’s area of responsibility, refugees are flowing outside that area. As mentioned previously, this requires extensive coordination that combatant commanders understand is critical to the security of their regions. However, in this case, refugee flows across borders provide organizations like the so-called Islamic State an opportunity to exploit seams like geographic boundaries as well as seams created by organizational structure. Former EUCOM Commander General Philip Breedlove testified before the U.S. Senate’s Armed Services Committee that the challenge emanating from the Islamic State as “spreading like a cancer, taking advantage of paths of least resistance, threatening European countries and our own....”³⁹ Breedlove’s statement came just months after a coordinated attack in Paris was conducted by cells of Islamic State operatives who had journeyed from Syria through Europe to France with a massive flow of war-weary refugees. An Islamic State commander stated that the group had “sent many operatives to Europe with the refugees” using an intentionally disconnected organizational structure and he described the cells’ use of the WhatsApp messaging service to communicate.⁴⁰ Even when dealing with an established and known threat with more

easily assignable agency, seams remain challenges for existing security systems and expose vulnerabilities to exploit.

Threat response provides another perspective on seams in the national security system. While transnational and transregional organizations like terrorist or criminal groups could have the potential to be handled by single entities within specifically prescribed areas of responsibility, many of these threats require a more comprehensive, holistic, and unified approach. This approach is applicable to cooperation between governments, between departments and agencies within governments, and even between individual actors confronting amorphous threats. While this interaction may seem simple, it is exactly this interaction that potentially creates seams. This perspective significantly expands the bounds of the kinds of threats that exploit seams such that threats like health and environmental challenges and crises quickly become complex security challenges. Lacking the same agency of terrorism or crime, pandemics and natural disasters can affect people just as drastically, if not more so. Robert Mandel describes these “threats without threateners” as those “lacking intentional initiation by hostile parties.”⁴¹ Mandel goes further, specifically writing that “much of this emerging threat originates not from states or even humans, but rather from natural phenomena” and places pandemics and “natural cataclysmic disasters” into this category.⁴² After all, Mandel writes, “natural disasters and infectious diseases have recently killed far more people than civil strife, as evidenced by comparing after the Cold War the staggering human devastation from floods and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) to the far smaller loss of life from domestic and international violence.”⁴³

Environmental challenges also create a non-traditional threat that belies security structures and likely require some kind of unified, integrated approach. Global warming and

climate change are a potential “‘threat multiplier’ that intensifies instability around the world by worsening water shortages, food insecurity, disease, and flooding” and ultimately “may create the fiercest battle our world has ever seen.”⁴⁴ Mandel offers criticism that the non-traditional nature of these threats make them “far more difficult” to address. One reason is that potential solutions require more than just one state or one organization to implement a single solution. The response to the 2016 Zika epidemic, which was labeled a global health emergency by the World Health Organization and spread to almost every country in the Western Hemisphere, has been described as “not so great” and “a series of missed opportunities” because of a lack of “interactive response” like the one that brought Ebola under control in Africa only a few years earlier.⁴⁵ Zika, along with other global health crises, and environmental challenges belong to everyone, not just segments of a national security system fragmented to confront a more traditional threat.



Covering The Seams

Organization, structure, and bureaucracy often become scapegoats for the troubles of large, complex organizations when challenges, and occasional failures, consume the system. The resulting initiatives and attempts at reorganization, restructuring, and process improvement are quickly touted as a better solution. However, when threats are actively pursuing weaknesses in the system, or when threats are indifferent to the structure of the system, these “better solutions” create new challenges, and potentially new seams. As Commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq in 2004, General Stanley McChrystal was faced with an adversary very much like what has already been described here. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) adroitly used information technology, leveraged a global interconnectedness, and “displayed a shape-shifting

quality.”⁴⁶ McChrystal writes that “AQI was successful because the environment allowed it to be” where the “bigger piece was something that extended beyond national borders--something that was temporal, not geographic.”⁴⁷ In *Team of Teams*, McChrystal writes that “AQI learned to live and operate in the gaps of our system” with him quickly realizing that “cordonning off separate institutional entities works only if their operating theaters are inextricably linked.”⁴⁸

For McChrystal, who had wide latitude within his command, his solution to covering seams being exploited by an agile, networked threat like AQI was to take what he saw as the positive attributes of tactical special operations teams and incorporate them across every aspect of the Task Force. He identified several factors that were important to confronting increasing complexity through organizational adaptability and ultimately ensuring the task force’s success. He writes, “We looked at the behaviors of our smallest units and found ways to extend them to an organization of thousands, spread across three continents.”⁴⁹ The first factors he describes are trust and common purpose. From McChrystal’s perspective, “The connectivity of trust and purpose imbues teams with an ability to solve problems that could never be foreseen by a single manager--their solutions often emerge as the result of interactions, rather than from top-down orders.”⁵⁰ Instead of reducing problems in order to identify a single solution, teams based on trust and purpose have the potential to consider and explore multiple, collaborative and potentially divergent solutions in rapid, adaptive cycles.

The next factor is “shared consciousness.” McChrystal defines shared consciousness as “the way transparency and communication can be used in an organization to produce extraordinary outcomes across even large groups.”⁵¹ Put more simply, trust and purpose enabled shared consciousness of teams. McChrystal describes the how important it was to “fuse generalized awareness with specialized expertise,” to “share a fundamental, holistic

understanding of the operating environment,” and to preserve each team’s distinct skill sets” in order to develop a sense of “emergent, adaptive organizational intelligence.”⁵² By itself, implementing the idea of shared consciousness does not necessarily require significant reorganization or restructuring. McChrystal was sensitive to preserving what already existed in the task force’s system--the distinct skill sets--but also creating a more comprehensive organizational understanding and appreciation of the problems they faced and the environment in which they were operating. For him, achieving shared consciousness helped overcome the previously unrealized interdependence in the environment--a key ingredient to covering potential seams in the system.⁵³

The last factor is “empowered execution,” which requires “pushing decision making and ownership to the right level for every action” and emphasizes “the new, and increasingly important, role of the senior leader.”⁵⁴ McChrystal describes how empowered execution allows for initiative and decision making, based on information sharing, “context, understanding, and connectivity.”⁵⁵ “Effective adaptation to emerging threats and opportunities requires the disciplined practice of empowered execution.”⁵⁶ Just as the idea of shared consciousness does not require upending an organization, empowered execution can be tailored to an organization. Linking the notion of disciplined practice with empowered execution establishes an ideological connection between networks and more traditional organizations. Ultimately, empowered execution provides the speed necessary to quickly make adjustments and cover seams in the system.

Despite the elaboration of trust, common purpose, shared consciousness, and empowered execution, the closing sentences of *Team of Teams* offer only a simple placebo for dealing with complex threats. McChrystal writes, “To defeat a network, we had become a network. We had

become a team of teams.”⁵⁷ On the surface, *Team of Teams* seems to advocate for radical organizational restructuring. The U.S. national security system may be cumbersome, but it does have a network architecture, albeit one lacking certain functionality. The existing strengths of the system, specifically what each component provides for national security, are too valuable to experiment with massive organizational restructuring. Kori Schake questions some of McChrystal’s recommendations for making organizations more adaptable by noting the challenges of scaling his approach to an enterprise level.⁵⁸ After all, he was *the* authority for a task force in Iraq, and the U.S. national security system is much larger and significantly more complex.

However, throughout *Team of Teams*, McChrystal admits the changes he implemented were really more about his organization’s culture. He concedes that culture change is not easy “in traditional organizations” but that it was necessary so that the task force could use these ideas properly.⁵⁹ Even if the phrases “team of teams” and “we had become a network to defeat a network” hover as platitudes, trust, common purpose, shared consciousness, and empowered execution are key attributes of networks and teams that have value for the U.S. national security system. Advocating for a more networked approach to national security, James Carafano writes, “Participants contribute more equally and the value of each individual contribution is more significant.”⁶⁰ He insightfully suggests that the “right knowledge and expertise can be combined to make high-quality decisions quickly” and that having a “fast OODA loop applied to issues regarding national security can be striking indeed.”⁶¹ For national security, Carafano prescribes a concept very similar to McChrystal’s experience with the task force. He writes, “Governments will have to build capabilities that enable their components to network with trust and confidence.”⁶² Even something small, like changing the name of the current “interagency policy

committee” construct to a “national security policy team” construct may have a significant impact. At the same time, simple terminology changes on their own are unlikely to invigorate the system enough to ensure that any seams are adequately covered.

In the last two decades, likely as a result of 9/11 and changes in the global environment, various studies have recommended changes to the U.S. national security system. One significant study, the Project on National Security Reform (PNSR), developed a recommendation “that the president selectively shift management of issues away from the President’s Security Council staff (and supporting interagency committees) to new empowered Interagency Teams.”⁶³ Further, in their final study report, PNSR developed multiple comprehensive systemic recommendations that include significant reorganization and restructuring. One of PNSR’s options is titled “A Hierarchy of Decentralized Teams,” which they summarize as “A hierarchy--national, regional, country--of empowered cross-functional teams [that] manage issues at all levels for the president, conducting issue management on a day-to-day basis.”⁶⁴ PNSR elaborates on this concept stating, “teams would focus intently on seamless policy formulation and implementation”⁶⁵ and

Rather than a clutter of multiple large departments and agencies working on many similar issues, a clearly authoritative and small group would integrate U.S. elements of national power for a single issue. Policy debates would not feature competing military, diplomatic, and intelligence perspectives, so much as a variety of integrated alternatives, including geographic, individual, bureaucratic and issue-based perspectives.⁶⁶

From this perspective, national security teams with the appropriate purview and authority provide a huge step towards covering seams in the system. PNSR asserts that the current national security system lacks empowered teams, specifically citing the interagency committee structure, military combatant commands, and embassy country teams through this lens.⁶⁷

Another helpful idea toward implementing teaming and networking ideas is how national security issues are classified. PNSR offers a construct to accompany their proposal for a “Hierarchy of Decentralized Teams” that, while written to embolden their specific recommendation, has potential value for any national security system’s organizational structure.⁶⁸ Offering similar advice for incorporating this perspective “into a successful system for the thinking and doing in the U.S. Government,” James Polk describes “five concentric bins of knowledge” including “space, the globe, regions, countries, and internal U.S. matters” that can be “further sub-organized into the time frame of near-, mid- and long-term.”⁶⁹ Polk continues that, while his “framework seems to defy modern reality that most of our problems today...abide by no boundaries,” “every transboundary issue imaginable can be binned in one of these categories.”⁷⁰ Both suggestions eliminate many existing seams simply by organizing issues to reflect today’s global environment. Even a senior U.S. military official recently stated that every combatant commander must think well beyond their areas of geographic and functional responsibility, insisting that a global view is necessary to U.S. national security.⁷¹ These schemas align with McChrystal’s notion of shared consciousness, where everyone involved has an increased level of awareness of context and issues and how they are interconnected within the system.

As an example, the CIA recently modernized their approach to organizing the agency’s work. This modernization initiative created ten new “Mission Centers” that “are not tethered to any single directorate and will work with all CIA elements to further enhance integration and interoperability” and “take full advantage of CIA officers and elements that have the expertise and capabilities to execute the mission.”⁷² Former CIA Director John Brennan described this effort as being “about how we work together to bring the best of the Agency to the challenges we

face.”⁷³ In essence, Brennan implemented a networked approach that linked the strengths already resident in the CIA into a collection of teams, in this case called “Mission Centers.” David Ignatius has described the agency’s modernization as a “work in progress” but asserts that “reforms should continue, but with adjustments....”⁷⁴ Ultimately, the CIA modernization effort, like McChrystal’s experience, is about the organization’s culture. It preserves strengths from the past while making room for a new approach to make the system more effective within the U.S. national security network and in a modern environment.

While the CIA example highlights the importance of implementing aspects of networks and teams, it also demonstrates some challenges that come with it. One significant challenge is willingness. When Director Brennan announced the changes at the CIA, several senior officials in operations and counterintelligence quit in protest.⁷⁵ However, Ignatius cites a senior operations official who noted that “The integration piece of modernization is valuable, a proven concept in the field, and we’re now bringing it to the headquarters” and that Brennan was right to push to implement the new concept.⁷⁶

Another challenge is time. If McChrystal’s ideas, the PNSR concepts, Polk’s national security issue classification scheme, and Brennan’s CIA modernization are really about culture, change will likely happen slowly, and require a combination of open-mindedness, flexibility, and discipline to see how attributes from networks and teams provide value. Returning back to the critical factors in McChrystal’s experience, this is exactly why trust and common purpose are so important. If individual participants fear the system they are in will not act in their interest, those individuals are less likely to support the system. Likewise, when collective individual purpose is aligned with the system’s ultimate goals, positive outcomes are much more likely.

Ultimately, any changes must preserve the strengths of the current system and its structure while transforming the culture to deeply imbue elements of networks and teams. Casting aside decades of refinement simply to cover systemic seams risks sacrificing institutional strengths. The NSC, National Security Advisor, and associated staff serve an important purpose in dealing with U.S. strategic priorities. The Defense Department, State Department and U.S. intelligence community provide unique and unmatched capabilities and contributions to U.S. national security. And in today's world, national security extends to many more sections of the U.S. government. Growing trust, purpose, shared consciousness, and empowered execution in this system will take time and practice and will come with frustration as it produces success. But, done correctly, it will strengthen U.S. national security and help to cover seams modern threats exploit.



Conclusion

The U.S. national security system must not be a lethargic behemoth, but rather an adaptable, responsive system that capitalizes on strengths while working to identify and remove weaknesses. Modern transnational and transregional threats, whether identifiable actors or nebulous, non-traditional challenges, will exploit those weaknesses. The seams in the national security system are exactly this kind of weakness. Geographic boundaries, borders, and areas of responsibility provide a simple representation of these seams. At the same time, divisions between components of the national security system create another seam. However, some of the attributes transnational and transregional threats themselves possess have the potential to provide a solution for covering the seams. The ability to adapt, respond, and act quickly are some of these attributes. Other organizations have been successful at making them work, without

unnecessary disruption to core missions and functions. McChrystal's effort to make his task force in Iraq more like a network required key concepts of trust, common purpose, shared consciousness, and empowered execution to be successful. Using these concepts in today's comprehensive national security network may have a similar profound impact without completely upending the strengths of the current system.

The U.S. national security system is already a network with resident robust capability, but it is a network in need of revitalization in order to effectively address modern transnational and transregional threats. As a first step towards this revitalization, it is imperative that the President have complete trust in his National Security Council and National Security Advisor, establish specific priorities for national security, and then empower the people tasked to develop and execute national security policy. Establishing a prioritized, subject-matter-centric team model, with appropriate authority and autonomy, reporting to the highest level of the national security apparatus, will also provide the system an example to follow in order to capitalize on network attributes. Similar to PNSR's Presidential Priority Teams, this model provides a specific mission focus and a foundation for expanding networking and teaming attributes more effectively in the national security system.

At the same time, national security leaders must continue to develop systems and procedures to process information so that it can better inform national security. Following Polk's suggestion for "bins of knowledge," monitoring and analyzing information on a global scale is a huge undertaking. However, sharing information so that it feeds the awareness of the entire national security network is critical to success. This kind of information system can be prioritized, similar to the subject-matter priorities of national security teams. Likewise, creating a process to elevate new issues from a lower level of importance to a higher level of importance

and vice versa) will be important to smartly prioritizing and utilizing national security resources and responding to modern threats with agility and responsiveness.

Any changes to the U.S. national security system must focus on the system's purpose of providing national security. As the definition of national security continues to evolve, the idea of fostering characteristics of networks and teams will be important to confronting yet-to-be-seen challenges. Even former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft has recently written about the challenge of effectively integrating all elements of power with at the NSC.⁷⁷ U.S. national security is not bounded by organizations listed in historic acts or presidential directives. It exists to keep the United States, its people, and a way of life safe and prosperous for generations into the future. Adapting that system so that it is better able to confront modern, emerging, and unexpected threats remains critically important to that vital mission.

For Further Study

Schake wrote about Team of Teams, "the concepts are hardly revolutionary."⁷⁸ Nonetheless, they are not necessarily simple to implement. Much about trust, common purpose, shared consciousness, and empowered execution really does reside within an organization's culture. And while culture change can be a difficult, long-term undertaking, particularly for a large collection of traditional organizations that populate the U.S. national security system, it is only one piece of getting the system to leverage network attributes. Potential other pieces include personnel development and management, leadership development, and technology development.

First, people are fundamental components of the U.S. national security system, and generating an understanding of network and team attributes requires education, training, and

practice. Where existing personnel development programs do exist, they are focused on benefiting individual departments and their missions, and not the U.S. national security system. Actively working within a network requires skills in managing and sharing information and working cohesively to accomplish focused national strategic priorities.

Second, even McChrystal acknowledged how critical leaders are to the success of networked organizations. In a prelude to his book he wrote, "As we learned to build an effective network, we also learned that leading that network--a diverse collection of organizations, personalities, and cultures--is a daunting challenge in itself."⁷⁹ Networks and teams are different from bureaucracies and hierarchical organizations, and require different organizational leadership.

Finally, modern technology is closely connected to network attributes. Technology should be an enabler, not a solution to improving the U.S. national security system. Carafano writes, "The hierarchical practices of traditional government are not keeping pace; they are inadequate for exploiting the explosion of social networking systems."⁸⁰ Modern technology may specifically enable the development of shared consciousness, but it may also provide avenues for developing solutions. These ideas, with many others, is exactly the kind of concept that needs further development and experimentation to help the system cover the seams.

Notes

1. Alan G. Whittaker, Frederick C. Smith, and Ambassador Elizabeth McKune, *The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System*, Research Report, 24 November 2008 Annual Update, (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, U.S. Department of Defense, 2008), 6, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA502949> (accessed 23 November 2016)
2. The National Security Act of 1947, 26 July 1947, <http://global.oup.com/us.companion.websites/9780195385168/resources/chapter10/nsa/nsa.pdf> (accessed 8 January 2017).
3. Ibid.
4. Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer, 'Introduction,' *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2013) xiv.
5. The National Security Act itself established formal members of the NSC, including the President; the Secretaries of State, Defense, and the military services, the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board, and others designated by the President "from time to time." See The National Security Act of 1947.
6. Richard A Best, Jr., *The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment*, CRS Report for Congress, 28 December 2011 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2011), Summary Page, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA481495> (accessed 23 November 2016).
7. Ibid., 7.
8. Presidential Policy Directive-1, 13 February 2009 (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2009), <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/ppd/ppd-1.pdf> (accessed 23 November 2016).
9. Statement by the President on the White House Organization for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 26 May 2009, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-president-white-house-organization-homeland-security-and-counterterrorism> (accessed 9 January 2017)
10. About the Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Department of Defense, <https://www.defense.gov/About-DoD> (accessed 9 January 2017)
11. Roger R. Trask and John P. Glennon, eds., *Documents on Organization and Mission, 1978-2003*, The Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 2008), v, [http://history.defense.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=kOO3J7sNua8%](http://history.defense.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=kOO3J7sNua8%25) (accessed 9 January 2017).

12. Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 1 October 1986, http://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDReordAct1986.pdf (accessed 9 January 2017).

13. Department Mission Statement, Bureau of Budget and Planning, U.S. Department of State: Diplomacy in Action, <https://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/index.htm#mission> (accessed 9 January 2017).

14. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State: Diplomacy in Action, <https://www.state.gov/p/> (accessed 9 January 2017).

15. NOTE: DoS maintains diplomatic posts for countries around the world, as well as for international organizations and other state-like entities.

16. NOTE: The Office of Homeland Security eventually became the Department of Homeland Security.

17. James B. Steinberg, "Erasing the Seams: An Integrated, International Strategy to Combat Terrorism," The Brookings Institute, 3 May 2006, 5, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20060503-1.pdf> (accessed 23 November 2016).

18. Ibid., 6-22.

19. Ibid., 6-7.

20. Ibid., 5.

21. Ibid., 5, 5-6.

22. Ibid., 5.

23. Statement by the President on White House Organization.

24. Ibid..

25. Within the DoD, Syria and Iraq fall under the purview of U.S. Central Command. Within DoS, both countries fall within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. However, the interests of other countries, such as Turkey, Russia, European countries dealing with migrant flows, or African countries dealing with related extremism challenges, require the attention of other different parts of the same larger organization. In the case of Turkey and Russia, both fall under the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at DoS and U.S. European Command for DoD. Developing a coordinated, holistic U.S. approach to the conflict becomes increasingly complex, simply because of lines drawn on maps--one kind of simple seam.

26. Testimony by Lori Robinson, USAF, For Reappointment To The Grade Of General And To Be Commander, United States Northern Command / Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing (Lanham: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc, 2016),

<http://aufric.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1785762921?accountid=4332> (accessed 12 January 2017).

27. Current USCENTCOM Commander General Joseph Votel described the necessary and “critical” close relationships between combatant commanders.²⁷ Current USEUCOM Commander General Curtis Scaparrotti suggested an adjusted “construct to allow the military to seamlessly operate across geographic boundaries....” See Testimony by Joseph Votel, USA, For Reappointment To The Grade Of General And To Be Commander, United States Central Command, Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing (Lanham: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc, 2016),

<http://aufric.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1771770945?accountid=4332> (accessed 12 January 2017). See also, Testimony by Curtis Scaparrotti, USA, For Reappointment To The Grade Of General And To Be Commander, United States European Command And Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing (Lanham: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc, 2016),

<http://aufric.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1783567995?accountid=4332> (accessed 12 January 2017)

28. The 9/11 Commission Report, 118, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf> (accessed 17 January 2017).

29. Ibid., 118.

30. Ibid., 118.

31. Ibid., 119.

32. Ibid., 263.

33. LTC Michael F. Beech, “Observing Al Qaeda Through The Lens Of Complexity Theory: Recommendations For The National Strategy To Defeat Terrorism” (U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, 3 May 2004), 6, <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA423895> (accessed 13 September 2016).

34. Ibid., 6.

35. Air War College Grand Strategy Seminar presentation, 17 January 2017.

36. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “Afterword (September 2001): The Sharpening Fight for the Future,” *Networks and Netwar: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, eds. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 363.

37. Ibid., 367.

38. Ibid., 365.

39. Lisa Ferdinando, “Breedlove: European Security Situation ‘Serious,’ ‘Complicated,’” Defense Media Activity, DoD News, U.S. Department of Defense, 1 March 2016,

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/683569/breedlove-european-security-situation-serious-complicated> (accessed 18 January 2017)

40. Anthony Faiola and Souad Mekhennet, "Tracing the path of four terrorists sent to Europe by the Islamic State," *The Washington Post*, 22 April 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-europes-migrant-crisis-became-an-opportunity-for-isis/2016/04/21/ec8a7231-062d-4185-bb27-cc7295d35415_story.html?utm_term=.d715ab034090 (accessed 18 January 2017).

41. Robert Mandel, *Global Threat: Target-Centered Assessment and Management* (Westport, Praeger Security International: 2008), 13.

42. Ibid., 13.

43. Ibid., 13.

44. Ibid., 14.

45. Donald G. McNeil, Jr., "How the Response to Zika Failed Millions," *The New York Times*, 16 January 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/16/health/zika-virus-response.html?_r=0 (accessed 21 Jan 2017).

46. General Stanley McChrystal et al., *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 26.

47. Ibid., 27.

48. Ibid., 83-4.

49. Ibid., 20.

50. Ibid., 114.

51. Ibid., 6-7.

52. Ibid., 153.

53. Ibid., 219.

54. Ibid., 7.

55. Ibid., 216.

56. Ibid., 219.

57. Ibid., 251.

58. Kori Schake, "Is Stan McChrystal Right About Adapting to Win?" War on the Rocks, 15 June 2015, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/06/is-stan-mcchrystal-right-about-adapting-to-win/> (accessed 25 October 2016).

59. McChrystal, *Team of Teams*, 154 & 251.

60. James Jay Carafano, *Wiki at War: Conflict in a Socially Networked World* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 9.

61. Ibid., 10. NOTE: OODA is an acronym for Observe-Orient-Decide-Act developed by Colonel John Boyd. See Carafano, *Wiki at War*, 7.

62. Ibid., 215.

63. Project on National Security Reform, *Forging A New Shield*, November 2008, xiii. http://0183896.netsolhost.com/.../12/pnsr_forging_a_new_shield_report.pdf (accessed 27 October 2016).

64. Ibid., 442.

65. Ibid., 509.

66. Ibid., 509.

67. Ibid., 509.

68. Ibid., 517. NOTE: The PNSR proposal includes:

- Presidential Priority Teams to focus on the president's top national security priorities.
- Global Issue Teams that work global or transregional issues.
- Regional Issue Teams that work regional, cross-regional, and sub-regional issues.
- Empowered Country Teams (separate from existing Embassy Country Teams) that work bilateral issues.

69. Dr. Robert B. Polk, "Designing the U.S. President's Ability to Make Strategy," in *Forging An American Grand Strategy: Securing A Path Through A Complex Future*, ed. Sheila R. Ronis (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, October 2013), 86-7.

70. Ibid., 87.

71. Air War College Commandant's Lecture Series Presentation, 24 January 2017.

72. "CIA Achieves Key Milestone in Agency-Wide Modernization Initiative," Central Intelligence Agency News and Information, 1 October 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/press-releases-statements/2015-press-releases-statements/cia-achieves-key-milestone-in-agency-wide-modernization-initiative.html> (accessed 1 December 2016).

73. Ibid.

74. David Ignatius, "Will John Brennan's Controversial CIA Modernization Survive Trump?" *The Washington Post*, 17 January 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/will-john-brennans-controversial-cia-modernization-survive-trump/2017/01/17/54e6cc1c-dcd5-11e6-ad42-f3375f271c9c_story.html?utm_term=.8df832a4344b (accessed 27 January 2017).

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Lt Gen (ret.) Brent Scowcroft, Foreword, *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, eds. Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), xii.

78. Schake, "Is Stan McChrystal Right About Adapting to Win?"

79. Stanley McChrystal, "It Takes a Network: The new front line of modern warfare," *Foreign Policy*, 21 February 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/21/it-takes-a-network/> (accessed 27 January 2017)

80. Carafano, *Wiki at War*, 19.



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